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1981

What is Quality?

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Recommended Citation

South Dakota State University, Cooperative Extension, "What is Quality?" (1981). *SDSU Extension Fact Sheets*. 961.

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What is Quality?



Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture

WHAT IS QUALITY?

Well, there's *Quality* and then

there's **Quality**

Quality clothing construction means luxurious linings, lots of handwork and special extras. These features may be functional. They're also so beautifully done that it makes you feel good just to wear such a garment.

But this kind of quality is costly, so it may or may not have a place in your wardrobe or budget.

The other kind of **Quality** is simple but solid. This construction helps a garment work the way it's supposed to for as long as you want. The clothing looks good from the outside, holds up through wear and care, and is comfortable.

You can't always tell this simple, solid quality by price. But if you know how to recognize it, you can find it anywhere you shop—in department stores, bargain basements, chain stores, garage sales, specialty shops, and discount houses.

FIRST, ask yourself how the clothing will be used:

- **How often will you wear the garment?**

You'll find good construction is more important in those clothes that are worn frequently than in those worn only once in a while.

- **What kinds of activities will you wear it for?**

You may need reinforcement or added strength for strenuous work or play.

- **Can you wear the garment the way you want to?**

For instance, if you want to wear the collar unbuttoned, is the garment made so no unfinished seams will show?

- **Can it be let out if alterations are needed?**

You may not be able to let out clothes with deeply clipped or narrow seams, or if those little holes the manufacturer used for marking are too close to the seams.

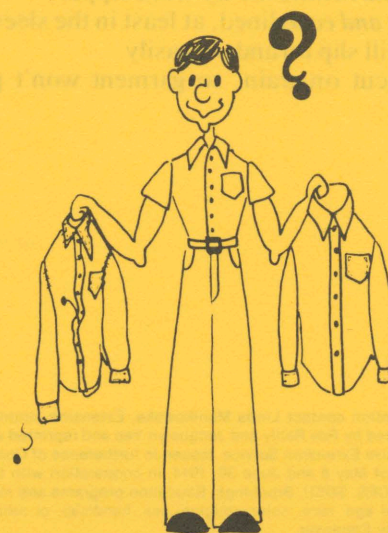
THEN, consider the construction:

The way clothing looks, its durability and comfort are all affected by the way the clothing is made. To help you evaluate these points in terms of clothing construction, use the **Quality Checklist** at the end of this leaflet.

But as you look through the checklist, remember:

- **Construction methods may vary, but this won't always reflect a difference in quality.**

For instance, two garments may be made differently. One may look finished inside and out. This construction may take many steps, so it is



usually expensive. The other garment may be sewn in fewer steps and therefore cost less to produce. Its inside may look less finished. But it may have the same durability as the first garment.

- **Some construction methods may seem new or unusual.**

You may see seams with raw edges on the outside—or decorative hems. If a construction technique seems difficult to evaluate, study its appearance. Then, ask: **Will it work?**

NOW, for the final decision:

Appearance, durability, and comfort aren't of equal importance in every clothing buy. But you can get some idea of just how important they are if you'll remember how you plan to use the garment.

Once you've rated a particular garment according to the Quality Checklist, then compare **what you need** with **what the garment has to offer**.

That way, you'll know if the clothing will work the way you want it to for as long as you want to wear it.

QUALITY CHECKLIST

How does the garment look? Check for these signs of quality:

- *fabric* cut on-grain
- *plaids, stripes, or large prints* matched or pleasingly arranged
- *thread* matched to fabric—thread ends trimmed
- *seams and darts* smooth, not puckered, matched where appropriate
- *collar* crisp and smooth, without buckling—points even and flat, not bulky—undercollar hidden

- **neckline** smooth and flat, not bulky—facings hidden
- **front opening** smooth and flat
- **sleeves** smoothly set in, without puckers—any gathers spread evenly across sleeve
- **cuffs** crisp and smooth, no buckling—placket large enough so hand can easily slip through
- **waistband** crisp, shouldn't roll or collapse
- **pockets** evenly placed on garment
- **zipper** flat, inconspicuous, neatly stitched—on knit fabrics, zipper in line with fabric rib
- **buttons** properly spaced—when buttoned, fabric lies flat without puckers—on heavy fabrics, buttons sewn on with shanks
- **buttonholes** neatly stitched, evenly spaced and equal in size—buttonholes fit over buttons—bound buttonholes have neat corners
- **snaps, hooks and eyes** located where needed, inconspicuous
- **hems** inconspicuous—any decorative hem stitching evenly sewn
- **topstitching and other decorative stitching** even and suitable in size

Will it last as long as you want it to? Look for these features:

- **stitching** even, of appropriate length for fabric and use—balanced tension above and underneath—thread ends secured
- **seams** flat—wide enough to withstand normal stress—reinforced in areas of strain (under arms and crotch)—raw edges finished on fabric that ravel, overcast on knits—tape sewn on seams that shouldn't stretch (like shoulder seams on knit garments)
- **darts** tapered to fine point with ends secured—marking holes well within seam lines
- **necklines and front openings** reinforced when necessary
- **pockets** securely stitched with reinforced ends
- **fly-front zippers** reinforced with bar tack at bottom—button tab added behind zipper to reduce strain

- **buttons** securely attached—surrounding area interfaced
- **buttonholes** securely stitched with ends reinforced—surrounding area interfaced—corners on bound buttonholes secured
- **snaps, hooks and eyes** securely attached
- **hems** stitched securely, but not tightly—finished if fabric frays
- **linings** attached to garments at seams—jackets and coats made with center-back pleat and ease-tucks in the sleeves and garment hems
- **pressing** smooth—seams pressed before crossed by other seams
- **interfacing** smooth, flat and inconspicuous, neither larger nor smaller than the area that is interfaced

Will the clothing be comfortable? Consider these points:

- **seams** bound and **yokes, cuffs, and collarbands** lined if fabric would otherwise irritate skin
- **fly-shield** behind the fly-front zipper
- **jackets and coats** lined, at least in the sleeves, so they will slip on and off easily
- **fabric** cut on-grain, so garment won't pull or twist

For more information contact Linda Manikowske, Extension clothing and textiles specialist. Prepared by Rae Reilly and Jacquelyn Yep and reprinted with permission of Iowa Cooperative Extension Service. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with USDA, Hollis D. Hall, Director of CES, SDSU, Brookings, Education programs and materials offered without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, handicap, or national origin. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

File: 13.1—5,000 printed at estimated 4 cents each—10-81mb—259.

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